

CHAPTER 18

THE YOG OF RENUNCIATION

This is the last chapter of the Geeta, the first half of which is devoted to the resolution of several questions posed by Arjun, whereas the latter half is the conclusion which dwells upon the many blessings that flow from the sacred work. Chapter 17 classified and elucidated food, penance, yagya, charity, and faith. In the same context, however, the different forms of renunciation (sanyas) have yet not been touched upon. What is the motive for whatever man does? Who is the motivator-God or nature? The question was raised earlier, but the present chapter again sheds light on it. Likewise, the subject of the “quadritype” division of men was broached earlier, but the present chapter again takes it up and closely analyzes its character within the framework of nature. Then, at the end, numerous advantages that ensue from the Geeta are illuminated.

After having listened to Krishn’s categorization of various subjects in the previous chapter, Arjun now also desires to be enlightened on the different forms of renunciation (sanyas) and relinquishment (tyag).

1. **“Arjun said, ‘I am curious to learn, O the mighty armed, O Hrishikesh, master of the senses and slayer of demons the principles of relinquishment and of renunciation.’”**

Total abandonment is renunciation, a state in which even will

अर्जुन उवाच

संन्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।

त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक्केशिनिषूदन ॥१॥

and merits of action cease to be, and prior to which there is only endless giving up of attachment for fulfillment of the spiritual quest. There are two questions here: Arjun wants to know the essence of renunciation as well as the essence of relinquishment. Thereupon Yogeshwar Krishn says:

2. **“The Lord said, ‘Whereas numerous scholars use renunciation for the giving up of coveted deeds many others of mature judgement use relinquishment to name the abnegation of the fruits of all action.’”**
3. **“While many erudite men insist that since all actions are vile they ought to be forsaken, other scholars proclaim that deeds such as yagya, charity, and penance ought not to be forsaken.”**

After thus submitting varied opinions on the problem, the Yogeshwar advances his own definitive view.

4. **“Listen, O the best of Bharat, to my notion of renunciation and of how, O the unmatched among men, this renunciation is said to be of three kinds.”**
5. **“Rather than forsaking them, deeds such as yagya, charity, and penance ought certainly to be undertaken as a duty, for yagya, charity, and penance are deeds that redeem men of wisdom.”**

Krishn has thus submitted four prevalent thoughts. First, that coveted deeds should be foresworn. Second, that the fruits of all

श्रीभगवानुवाचः काम्यानां कर्मणा न्यासं संन्यासं कवायो विदुः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥ २ ॥
त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।
यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥ ३ ॥
निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः संप्रकीर्तितः ॥ ४ ॥
यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ ५ ॥

action should be given up. Third, that all actions should be relinquished, for they are all blemished. And fourth, that it is wrong to forego yagya, charity, and penance. Expressing his accord with one of these thoughts, Krishn says that it is also his conclusive view that yagya, charity and penance are not to be forsaken. This illustrates how divergent views on the question were current at Krishn's time, too, out of which, one was true. Even today there are many views. When a sage makes his advent in the world he isolates and puts forward that which is the most salutary among the many varying doctrines. All great Souls have done this and Krishn has done the same. Instead of advocating a new way he only supports and expounds that which is true among many accepted views.

6. **“It is my considered belief, O Parth, that these deeds as also all others ought certainly to be accomplished after forsaking attachment and desire for the fruits of labour.”**

Replying to Arjun's question, Krishn then examines relinquishment.

7. **“And, since the requisite action ought not to be abandoned, forsaking it out of some misconception is deemed as renunciation of the nature of ignorance (tamas).”**

According to Krishn the ordained, essential action is only one—the performance of yagya. The Yogeshwar has reverted to and stressed the ordained mode time and again, lest the seeker should deviate from the right path. And now he declares that it is improper to abandon this ordained action. Forsaking it out of some delusion is thus said to be relinquishment of the diabolical kind (that is, of the nature of tamas). The deed that ought to be done and the ordained action are the same, and giving it up out of involvement in objects of sensual pleasure is morally, improper. The man who abandons such action is doomed to rebirth in low forms, for he has suppressed the impulse for divine adoration.

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।

कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चित मतमुत्तमम् ॥ ६ ॥

नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।

मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तारमसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ ७ ॥

Krishn next speaks about relinquishment that is tainted by passion and moral blindness (**rajas**).

- 8. “He who rashly foregoes action under the assumption that all of it is grievous, or out of fear of physical suffering, is deprived of the merits of his relinquishment.”**

One who is incapable of worship and who casts off action because of his apprehension of physical pain is reckless and morally in error, and his relinquishment-of the nature of passion (rajas)- fails to bring him the ultimate repose of mind that should be the end of relinquishment.

- 9. “Only that relinquishment is esteemed righteous, O Arjun, which is ordained and practised with the conviction that doing it after having forsaken attachment and fruits of labour is a moral commitment.”**

So only the ordained deed is to be done and all else has to be discarded. However, shall we go on doing it endlessly or will there be a point when it too is given up? Speaking of this, Krishn now points out the way of relinquishment that is good and worthwhile.

- 10. “Gifted with flawless moral excellence and freedom from doubt, one who neither abhors deeds that are unpropitious nor is enamoured of those that are propitious is wise and self-denying.”**

Only the action prescribed by scripture is auspicious and all that is opposed to it is mere bondage of this mortal world and therefore inauspicious. The person of equanimity, who neither loathes what is inauspicious nor is attached to that which is auspicious, because for such a person even that which had to be

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशथात्तज्जेत् ।

स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्याफलं लभेत् ॥ ८ ॥

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।

सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥ ९ ॥

न द्वेष्टन्नकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।

त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ॥ १० ॥

done has at last come to an end, is imbued with righteousness, emancipated from doubt, and discerning. So such a person is enabled to disown all. This total relinquishment, coming along with accomplishment, is renunciation. Is there, we might be tempted to ask, any easier way? Krishn categorically denies the possibility.

- 11. “Since the abandonment of all action by an embodied being is impossible, the one who has given up the fruits of action is credited with having practised relinquishment.”**

“Embodied beings” does not imply only gross, visible bodies. According to Krishn the three properties of virtue (sattwa), passion (rajas), and ignorance (tamas), born out of nature, imprison the Soul within the body. The Soul is embodied only as long as these properties remain. So long he will have to pass from one body to another, for the properties that beget the body are still in existence. Since an embodied Soul cannot eschew all action, it is said that one who has given up the fruits of action has mastered renunciation. Hence it is that it is imperative to do the prescribed deed and renounce its fruits so long as the properties that make the body remain. If, on the other hand, actions are undertaken with some desire or the other, they do bear fruits.

- 12. “Whereas the triple returns-good, bad, and mixed-of covetous people’s actions, issue forth even after death, the actions of people who have renounced all, do not ever bear any fruits.”**

The deeds of avaricious men produce consequences that arise even after death. These consequences indeed persist through endless births. But the actions of those who have relinquished all-of true sanyasi (so called because they have given up all their possessions)-do not bear fruits at any time. This is complete renunciation the highest stage of spiritual seeking.

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।

यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥ ११ ॥

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।

भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित् ॥ १२ ॥

The examination of the outcome of good and bad deeds, and of their ceasing at the point where all desire is annihilated, is thus concluded. Krishn then takes up the causes that effect righteous and unrighteous actions.

13. “Learn well from me, O the mighty-armed, the five principles that Sankhya ¹ acknowledges as accomplishers of all action.”

14. “In respect of this, there are the prime mover, the several agents, the varied endeavours, the sustaining power, and likewise the fifth means that is providence.”

The mind is the doer. Virtuous and evil inclinations are the agents. Performance of righteous action demands a predisposition to discernment, non-attachment, tranquillity, self-restraint, sacrifice, and constant meditation. But lust, anger, infatuation, aversion, and avarice are the agents that effect unrighteous deeds. There are then the manifold efforts-the endless desires-and the means. That aspiration begins to be fulfilled which is supported by means. And last of all there is the fifth principle, providence or sanskar-the outcome of all that has happened to the Soul in the past. This is borne out by Krishn.

15. “These are the five causes of whatever action a man accomplishes with his mind, speech, and body, either in accordance with or even in contravention of scripture.”

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे ।
सांख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम् ॥ १३ ॥
अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥ १४ ॥
शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥ १५ ॥

1. Sankhya is the name of one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy. It is so called because it enumerates twenty-five tattva or true principles; and its chief object is to secure the final emancipation of the twenty-fifth tattva, i.e. the Purush or Soul, from the bonds of wordly existence by imparting knowledge of the twenty-four other tattva and by properly distinguishing the Soul from them.

16. “Despite this, however he who-out of his immature judgement-views the consummate, detached Self as the doer is dull-minded and he sees not.”

As the Soul is identical with God, the pronouncement also implies that God does not act.

This is the second time that the Yogeshwar has stressed the point. He said in Chapter 5 that God neither acts himself nor impels others to act, nor does he bring about even the association of actions. Then why do we say that everything is done by God? It is only because our minds are clouded by delusion. We just say whatever comes to our mind. However, as Krishn has affirmed, there are five causes of action. Yet the ignorant man, incapable of perceiving the reality, views the lone, Godlike Soul as the doer. He fails to realize that God does not perform any deed. Paradoxically, however, while saying all this, Krishn also girds up his loins for Arjun and assures him that he has just to play the part of an instrument, for he (Krishn) is the real doer-arbiter. What after all is the sage's import?

In truth, there is a line of gravity that separates God from nature. So long as the seeker is within the boundaries of nature, of the three properties, God does not act. While abiding close by the worshipper, he is yet only an onlooker. But when the seeker gets hold of the cherished goal with firm intentness, God begins to regulate his inner life. The seeker then breaks free from the gravity of nature and enters the realm of God. God ever stands by such a seeker. But he acts only for a worshipper such as this. So let us always meditate on him.

17. “Though he may slay, the man who is liberated from conceit and whose mind is unsullied is neither a killer nor bound by his action.”

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारमात्मानं केवलं तु यः ।

पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः ॥ १६ ॥

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।

हत्वापि स इमाल्लोकां हन्ति न निबध्यते ॥ १७ ॥

Rather than granting licence to kill without any fear, the verse signifies that the truly liberated person acts as a mere instrument of the Supreme Spirit. Such a person may sometimes be compelled to do even violent and awesome deeds (like Arjun), but he undertakes them in a wholly detached and selfless spirit as well as with the conviction that doing them is his bounden duty. So, although such a liberated person slays from the worldly point of view, he does not really slay. In truth, however, one who dwells in constant awareness of God is of necessity disinclined to anything that is evil. Such a person is simply not tempted to destroy, for the world which tempts people to destroy no longer exists for him because of his total renunciation of the aggregate of all his deeds.

18. “Whereas the way of securing knowledge, the worthwhile knowledge, and the knower constitute the threefold inspiration to action, the doer, the agents, and the action itself are the threefold constituents of action.”

Arjun is told that the impetus to action is derived from all-knowing seers, the mode of acquiring knowledge, and the object that is worthy of being acquired. Krishn has said earlier that he is the object worth knowing. The stimulus to action is derived only when there is a realized sage with perfect knowledge who can initiate the seeker into the way by which the desired knowledge can be obtained, and when the seeker's eyes are fixed on his goal. Similarly, the store of action begins to grow by the coming together of the doer-dedication of mind, agents such as wisdom, disinterest in the material world, repose, and self-restraint by which the action is accomplished, and awareness of the action. It has been pointed out earlier that neither does the undertaking of action by the seeker after accomplishment have any purpose, nor is there any loss even in its abandonment. Yet he engages in action even then for the generation of virtuous powers in the hearts of those who are left behind. This is effected by the confluence of the doer, the agents, and the action itself.

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।

करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसंग्रहः ॥ १८ ॥

Knowledge, action, and the doer are also each of three kinds.

19. **“Listen to me well on how even knowledge and action and the doer have been graded into three kinds each, in the Sankhya philosophy of properties (gun).”**

The next verse throws light upon the character of virtuous knowledge.

20. **“Know that knowledge as immaculate (sattwik) by which one perceives the reality of the indestructible God as an undivided entity in all divided beings.”**

Such knowledge is direct perception, with which the properties of nature come to an end. It marks the culmination of awareness. Let us now see knowledge of the second (rajas) kind.

21. **“Know that knowledge as tainted by passion by which one perceives divided entities in all separate beings.”**
22. **“And know that knowledge as besmirched by ignorance (tamas) which adheres to the body alone as if it were the whole truth, and which is irrational, unfounded on truth, and petty.”**

Devoid of wisdom and the required discipline to buttress it, this kind of knowledge is worthless as it takes one away from awareness of God who is the one and only reality.

The following verses then recount the three kinds of action.

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।
प्रोच्यते गुणसंख्याने यथाच्छृणु तान्यपि ॥ १९ ॥
सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम् ॥ २० ॥
पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान्पृथग्विधान् ।
वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ २१ ॥
यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन्कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम् ।
अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २२ ॥

- 23. “That action is said to be immaculate which is ordained and embarked on with detachment, by one who is free from infatuation as well as loathing, and who does not aspire to any reward.”**

The ordained action is none other than worship and meditation that lead the Soul to God.

- 24. “And that action is said to be of the nature of passion which is strenuous and entered upon by one who covets rewards and is egotisti.**

This seeker also performs the ordained action, but what a great difference is made by the fact that he is desirous of rewards and possessed of vanity? So the action undertaken by him bears the character of moral blindness.

- 25. “That action is said to be unenlightened which is taken up out of sheer ignorance and with disregard for outcome, loss to oneself, and injury to others, as well as for one’s own competence.”**

Such action is bound to be reduced to nothingness at last and it is unquestionably not approved by scripture. Rather than action it is mere delusion.

Let us now see the attributes of the doer.

- 26. “That doer is said to be of immaculate nature who is free from attachment, who does not indulge in arrogant speech, and who is endowed with patience and vigour as well as unswayed by success and failure.”**

These are the attributes of the righteous doer and the action he undertakes is, of course, the same ordained action.

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत्तत्सात्त्विकमुच्यते ॥ २३ ॥
यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहङ्कारेण वा पुनः ।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ॥ २४ ॥
अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसामनवेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत्तामसमुच्यते ॥ २५ ॥
मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्धयसिद्धयोर्निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥ २६ ॥

27. “That doer is said to be of the attribute of passion who is impulsive, covetous of the fruits of action, acquisitive, pernicious, vitiated, and subject to joy and sorrow.”
28. “That doer is said to be of the attribute of ignorance who is fickle, uncouth, vain, devious, spiteful, dispirited, lazy, and procrastinatin.

These are the attributes of the ignorant doer. The scrutiny of the qualities of doers is concluded at this point and Yogeshwar Krishn now embarks on an examination of the attributes of judgement (intellect), resolve, (steadfastness) and felicity (happiness).

29. “Listen to me, too, O Dhananjay, on the threefold classification according to the properties of nature as I make them exhaustively and respectively, of intellect, steadfastness, and happiness.”
30. “That intellect is immaculate, O Parth, which is aware of the essence, of the way of inclination as also of renunciation, of worthy and unworthy action, of fear and fearlessness, and of bondage and liberation.”

In other words, the righteous, morally good intellect is that which is aware of the distinction between the way that leads to God and the way to recurrent birth and death.

31. “That intellect is of the nature of passion and moral blindness, O Parth, by which one cannot even know the righteous and the unrighteous as well as what is worthy or unworthy of being done.”

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।
 हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ २७ ॥
 अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धशठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।
 विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ॥ २८ ॥
 बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं शृणु ।
 प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनंजय ॥ २९ ॥
 प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्यकार्ये भयाभये ।
 बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥ ३० ॥
 यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च ।
 अयथावत्प्रजानाति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३१ ॥

32. “That intellect is of the nature of ignorance, O Parth, which is enveloped in darkness and which apprehends the sinful as virtuous and views everything in a distorted way.”

In verses 30-32 thus, intellect is graded into three kinds. The intellect which is well aware of the action that has to be engaged in and the action that has to be shunned, as well as of that which is fit or unfit to be done, is characterized by moral excellence. The intellect which has only a dim perception of the righteous and the unrighteous action, and which does not know the truth, is dominated by passion. The perverse intellect that deems the sinful as virtuous, the destructible as eternal, and the inauspicious as auspicious, is shrouded in the gloom of ignorance.

The discussion of intellect is concluded here and Krishn next takes up the three kinds of steadfastness.

33. “That resolute steadfastness, by which, O Parth, one governs through the practice of yog operations of the mind, the life-breaths, and the senses, is immaculate.”

Yog is the process of meditation, whereas the coming into mind of any impulse other than the impulse to such contemplation is moral transgression. Straying of the mind is deviation from the path of virtue. The unwavering resolution with which a man rules over his mind, breath, and senses is, therefore, of the nature of goodness. Directing the mind, the vital breaths, and the senses towards the desired goal is the morally excellent fortitude.

34. “That steadfastness, O Parth, by which the avaricious man holds fast and acquisitively to obligations, wealth, and pleasure, is of the nature of passion and moral blindness.”

Firmness of will in this case is concerned primarily with the discharging of one’s worldly duties, acquisition of wealth, and

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसावृता ।
सर्वार्थान्विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा तामसी ॥ ३२ ॥
धृता यया धारयते मनः प्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।
योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥ ३३ ॥
यया तु धर्मकामार्थान्धृत्या धारयतेऽर्जुन ।
प्रसङ्गेन फलकाङ्क्षी धृतिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३४ ॥

sensual pleasure, the three primary objects of material life, rather than with final liberation. The final end may be the same, but in this case the seeker aspires to fruits and desires something in return for his labour.

- 35. “(And) that steadfastness, O Parth, by which the evil-minded man declines to forsake sloth, fear, worry, grief, and also arrogance, is of the nature of ignorance.”**

Krishn next considers the three types of happiness-

- 36. “Now listen to me, O the best of Bharat, on the three kinds of happiness, including the felicity, which one comes to dwell in, by practice and thus achieves cessation of griefs.”**

That happiness is which the seeker attains to, by spiritual discipline by concentrating his or her mind on the cherished goal and this happiness is therefore a destroyer of griefs.

- 37. “That happiness which is at first like poison but finally tastes like nectar, for it issues forth from the lucidity of an intellect that has realized the Self, is of an impeccable nature.”**

The happiness that is come by through spiritual exercise, concentration of mind on the desired end, and in which all griefs come to an end, is bitter like venom at the commencement of worship. Prahlad was hanged and Meera was poisoned. Sant Kabir has pointed out the difference between the pleasure-loving world, that feasts and falls into unconscious slumber, and himself who stays awake shedding tears of contrition. But although this happiness is like poison at the outset, at the end it is like nectar that confers the substance of immortality. Such happiness, born out of a clear understanding of the Self, is said to be pure.

यथा स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च ।
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा पार्थ तामसी ॥ ३५ ॥
सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतवर्षभ ।
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ॥ ३६ ॥
यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तमात्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ॥ ३७ ॥

38. “That happiness which springs from the association of the senses with their objects, and which is like nectar at the beginning but like gall at the end, is said to be tainted with passion and moral blindness.”

The happiness obtained from the contact of the senses with their objects tastes like nectar in the course of enjoyment but like poison at the end, for this kind of happiness leads to repeated birth and death. So such happiness is rightly said to be impassioned and afflicted with moral blindness.

39. “That happiness which both initially and finally beguile the Self, and which arises from slumber, lethargy, and negligence, is said to be of the nature of ignorance.”

The happiness which both in the course of indulgence and subsequently, deludes the Soul, lays one unconscious in the dark night of worldly life, and which is born out of indolence and futile efforts, is of the nature of ignorance.

Krishn then proceeds to recount the scope of the properties of nature that ever pursue us.

40. “There is no being, either on earth or among the dwellers of heaven, who is entirely free from the three properties born of nature.”

All beings, right from Brahma at the top to worms and insects at the lowest, are transient, mortal, and under the sway of the three properties (Sattwa, rajas and tamas). Even heavenly beings including the various external gods, are subject to the malady of these properties.

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद्यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥ ३८ ॥
यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥ ३९ ॥
न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ॥ ४० ॥

Here, Yogeshwar Krishn has taken up the subject of external gods for the fourth time. That is, gods were spoken of in chapter 7,9, and 17. All the statements so far made by Krishn, imply that gods are influenced by the three properties of nature. Those who worship such gods, in reality worship that which is perishable and impermanent.

In the third section of Shreemad Bhagavat, while describing the meeting of nine Yogeshwars with the exalted sage Sukra, during the discourses, the sage Sukra said, that for love between male and female, the Lord Sankara and his consort Parvathi, for sound health the Ashwani Kumars (the celestial physician twins), for victory the Lord Indra (god Lord of heaven) and for material riches, Kuber (god protector of wealth), are to be worshipped. Similarly, talking of various desires at the end, he gave verdict that for fulfillment of all desires and for salvation one should worship the Lord Narayan alone.

Therefore, one should remember the Omnipresent Lord and for such accomplishment the only available means is to take refuge in an accomplished teacher, asking sincere questions and rendering service. Now see in this -

The devilish and divine treasures are two traits of the inner realm, out of which the divine treasures enable one to have the great vision of the Supreme Being, hence they are called divine but yet are within the influence of the three properties of nature. When the three properties of nature are pacified, the seeker too shall experience that absolute peace within. After this, such a realized sage- yogi shall have no more duties that he needs to perform and he will have attained the state of actionlessness.

The question of the organization of men into four classes (varn) that was initiated much earlier is now reintroduced. Is one's class determined by birth, or is it the name of the inner ability gained from one's action?

41. "The duties of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, as also of Shudr are determined by properties that are born out of their nature."

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।

कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥ ४१ ॥

If a man's nature is made up of the property of goodness, there is inner purity along with the ability to meditate and worship. If the dominating property is that of ignorance, lethargy, sleep, and insanity are the outcome, and the attempted action is at their level. The capacity of one's natural property is his varn-his character. Similarly, a partial combination of goodness and passion constitutes the Kshatriya class, whereas a partial combination of the property of ignorance and that of passion constitutes the Vaishya class.

This is the fourth time when Yogeshwar Krishn has taken up the issue. He named Kshatriya in Chapter 2 and said that "there is nothing more propitious for a Kshatriya than a righteous war." (verse 31) In Chapter 3 he said that although inferior in merit, one's own natural calling (dharm) is the best and even meeting with death while upholding it results in good, whereas an obligation other than one's own, even though well observed, generates nothing but dread. (verse 35) In Chapter 4, then, he indicated that he is the creator of the four classes. (verse 13) Does he mean by this that he has divided men into four rigid castes determined by birth? His answer to the question is an emphatic no, and he asserts that he has but divided action into four categories according to their inherent properties. The innate property of a being or object is a measure-a yardstick. So the division of mankind into four varn is only a division of the one and same action into four stages according to the motivating properties. In Krishn's words, action is the mode of attaining to the one, inexpressible God. The conduct that takes one to God is worship, which commences in faith in the desired end. So meditation on the Supreme Being is the one true action that Krishn has-divided into four steps in his system of varn. Now, how are we to know to which property and stage we belong? This is what Krishn turns to in the following verses.

42. "Self-restraint, subduing of the senses, innocence, continence, mercy, uprightness, piety, true knowledge, and direct perception of divinity are the Brahmins province-born out of his nature."

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिराजरवमेव च ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्मर स्वभावजम् ॥ ४२ ॥

Restraining the mind, curbing the senses, flawless purity, mortification of mind, speech, and body to mould them in tune with the cherished goal, forgiveness, all-pervading righteousness, staunch faith in the one aimed at goal, consciousness of the Supreme Being, the awakening in the realm of the heart of the exhortations coming from God, and the ability to act according to them-are all a Brahmin's obligations that arise from his own nature. It might be said, therefore, that the seeker is a Brahmin when all these merits are present in him and the commenced action is an integral part of his nature.

43. “Valour, majesty, dexterity, unwillingness to retreat in battle, charity, and sovereignty are the natural province of a Kshatriya.”

Bravery, achievement of divine glory, forbearance, competence in meditation-skill in action, disinclination to run away from struggle with the material world, relinquishment of all, and domination of all feelings by feeling for the Supreme Being-are all activities born out of the nature of a Kshatriya.

44. “Farming, protection of cows (the senses) and commerce are the natural province of a Vaishya, whereas rendering service is the natural calling of a Shudr.”

Agriculture, rearing of cattle, and commerce are duties in keeping with the nature of a Vaishya. Why only preservation of cows? Should we slaughter buffaloes? Is it wrong to keep goats? There is nothing at all like all this. In the ancient Vedic text, the word “go” (cow) was used to refer to the senses. So protection of “cows” means care of the senses. The senses are protected by discernment, non-attachment, restraint, and steadfastness. They are, on the other hand, riven and rendered feeble by lust, wrath, avarice, and attachment. Spiritual acquisition is the only true wealth.

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् ।
दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजम् ॥ ४३ ॥
कृषिगौरक्ष्यवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम्
परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम् ॥ ४४ ॥

This is our one true asset and once it has been earned, it stays on with us forever. Gradual amassing of this wealth in the course of our struggle with the world of matter or nature is trade. The acquisition of knowledge, which is the most precious of all riches, is commerce. And what is farming? The body is like a piece of earth. The seeds which are sown in it sprout in the form of sanskar- the merits of action: the force that is built up by all the actions in previous lives. Arjun is told that the seed (the initial impulse) of selfless action is never destroyed. Vaishya is the third step of the ordained action- of contemplation of the Supreme Being; and preservation of the seeds of divine meditation that are sown in this patch of earth-the body, while at the same time opposing hostile impulses, is agriculture. As Goswami Tulsidas has said, whereas the wise husbandman farms well and with care, they who are of deficient wisdom are insensible and arrogant. To protect the senses thus, to store spiritual wealth amidst the skirmishes of nature, and to always strengthen contemplation of the ultimate essence are the province of Vaishya.

According to Krishn, the omnipresent God is the final outcome of yagya. The devout souls who partake of this fruit are emancipated from all sins and it is the seeds of this action that are sown by the meditative process. To protect this germ is true husbandry. In Vedic writings food means the Supreme Spirit. God is the only real sustenance-the food. The Soul is fully placated at the completion of the exercise of contemplation and never again knows any craving. Once the exercise has been brought to successful conclusion, the Soul is freed from the cycle of birth and death. To go ahead sowing the seeds of this food is true husbandry.

To serve those who have attained to a higher spiritual status, revered men of accomplishment, is the duty of Shudr. Rather than meaning "base", Shudr means "one with deficient knowledge." It is the seeker at the lowest stage who is a Shudr. It is but proper that this initiate worshipper should begin his quest with rendering service. Service to men of accomplishment will in the course of time generate nobler impulses in him and he will thus gradually move up to the higher Vaishya, Kshatriya, and Brahmin stages. And ultimately he will go beyond varn (properties of nature) and become one with God. Character is a dynamic entity. There is change

in an individual's varn along with changes in his character. So, in fact, varn are the four-excellent, good, medium, and low-stages: the four steps, low and high, which seekers who tread the path of action have to climb. This is so because the action in question is only one-the ordained action. The only way to final attainment according to Krishn is that the worshipper should begin his journey in keeping with the attributes of his own nature.

- 45. “Commitment to his own inborn duty brings man to the ultimate accomplishment and you should listen to me on how a man achieves perfection through dedication to his innate calling.”**

The perfection that is ultimately achieved is realization of God. Krishn told Arjun earlier, too, that he would reach this final goal by engaging in action-the real, prescribed action.

- 46. “By adoration of that God, who has created all beings and who pervades the whole universe, through the undertaking of his natural calling, man attains to final accomplishment.”**

The seeker achieves final consummation through performance of his native duties. It is, therefore, essential that he should constantly keep his mind fixed on God, adore him, and proceed on his way step by step. Instead of making any gain, a junior student even loses whatever he has if he sits in a senior class. So the law is that one should climb step by step. It was said in the sixth verse of this chapter that yagya, charity, and penance ought to be undertaken after abandonment of attachment and fruits of action. Now, stressing the same point, Krishn says again that even a partially enlightened man ought to begin from the same point: from self-surrender to God.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥ ४५ ॥

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ ४६ ॥

47. “Even though unmeritorious, one’s own native calling is superior to the office of others, for a man carrying out his natural obligation does not bring sin upon himself.”

Although inferior, one’s own obligation is better than even the well performed duties of others. A man absorbed in performing a task that is determined by his own nature does not incur sin in so far as he is not subjected to the endless cycle of “entrances” and “exits”-of birth and death. It is quite often that worshippers begin to feel disenchanted with the service they are rendering-. They look at the more accomplished seekers who are absorbed in meditation and grow envious of the honour that is accorded them because of their merits. So novices at once fall to imitating. According to Krishn, however, imitation or envy can be of no avail. The final accomplishment is only by dedication to one’s own native calling, not by its abandonment.

48. “One’s innate duty ought not to be forsaken, O son of Kunti, even if it is blemished, because all actions are impaired by some flaw or the other as fire is shrouded by smoke.”

It is but expected that the actions of the novice seeker are flawed, for their doer is yet far from perfection. But even these actions must not be given up. Moreover, there is no action that is unimpeachable. And action has to be undertaken even by one, who belongs to the Brahmin class. Imperfections-the obscuring pall of nature-are there until there is steady devotion. They come to an end only when the action natural to a Brahmin is dissipated in God. But what are the attributes of the accomplisher at the point where action is no longer of any avail?

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ ४७ ॥
सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥ ४८ ॥

49. **“He whose intellect is aloof all round, who is without desire, and who has conquered his mind, attains to the ultimate state that transcends all action through renunciation.”**

“Renunciation” is, as we have already seen, complete self-abnegation. It is the condition in which the seeker abandons whatever he has and only then does he reach the point when no further action is needed. “Renunciation” and “attainment of the supreme state of actionlessness” are synonymous here. The yogi who has reached the state of actionlessness attains to the Supreme Being.

50. **“Learn in brief from me, O son of Kunti, of how one who is immaculate achieves realization of the Supreme Being, which represents the culmination of knowledge.”**

The following verses expound that way.

51. **“Blessed with a pure intellect, firmly in command of the Self, with objects of sensual gratification like sound forsaken, with both fondness and revulsion destroyed,-”**
52. **“Dwelling in seclusion, eating frugally, subdued in mind, speech and body, incessantly given to the yog of meditation, firmly resigned,-”**
53. **“Giving up conceit, arrogance of power, yearning, ill humour, and acquisitiveness, devoid of attachment, and in possession of a mind at repose, a man is worthy of becoming one with God.”**

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां संन्यासेनाधिगच्छति ॥ ४९ ॥
सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाप्नोति निबोध मे ।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥ ५० ॥
बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥ ५१ ॥
विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥ ५२ ॥
अहंकार बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ ५३ ॥

It is Further said of such a worshipper:

- 54. “In this serene-tempered man, who views all beings equally, who abides intently in the Supreme Being, neither grieving over nor hankering after anything, there is fostered a faith in me that transcends all else.”**

Now faith is at the stage where an outcome can ensue from it, namely, in the form of God-realization.

- 55. “Through his transcendental faith he knows my essence well, what my reach is, and having thus known my essence he is at once united with me.”**

The Supreme Being is perceived at the moment of attainment and, no sooner has this perception come about than the worshipper finds his own Soul blessed with the attributes of God himself: that his soul is-like God-indestructible, immortal, eternal, ineffable, and universal.

Krishn said in Chapter 2 that the Self is real, eternal, permanent, ineffable, and of the stuff of immortality. But only seers have apprehended him endowed with these qualities. So naturally the question arises as to what is meant by perception of the essence. There are many who set out to make rational tabulations of five or twenty-five principles. But Krishn’s verdict on the problem in Chapter 18 is quite clear, that God is the one supreme essence. And one who knows him is the seer. If you desire to know the truth and crave for the essence of God, contemplation and worship are an inescapable necessity.

Here, in verses 49 to 55, Yogeshwar Krishn has laid down explicitly that one has to act in the way of renunciation, too. As promised by him, he will expound in brief how through constant exercise of renunciation-through the Way of Knowledge-the worshipper who is free from desire and attachment, and who

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मदभक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥ ५४ ॥

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥ ५५ ॥

has an upright mind, attains to the supreme state of actionlessness. When the maladies of vanity, brute power, lust, wrath, arrogance, and infatuation-that force one down into the ravines of nature-are rendered feeble, and virtues such as discernment, non-attachment, self-restraint, firmness of will, abiding in solitude, and meditation-that lead one to God-are fully developed and active, the seeker is equipped to be united with the Supreme Being. It is this ability that is called transcendental faith and it is by this that the worshipper comes to apprehend the ultimate reality. He then knows what God is and, knowing his divine glories, he is at once merged with him. Putting it differently, Brahm, reality, God, the Supreme Spirit, and Self are all substitutes for each other. Knowing any one of them, we come to know them all. This is the final accomplishment, the final liberation, the final goal.

So the Geeta is unambiguous in its view that in both the Way of Knowledge or Discernment (or the Way of Renunciation) and the Way of Selfless Action, the ordained deed-meditation-has to be entered upon and accomplished for the attainment of the supreme state of actionlessness.

The importance of worship and meditation for the worshipper who has renounced all has been stressed so far. And now by introducing the idea of “devotion” the same is said for the yogi who undertakes selfless action.

56. “Although engaged in action whole heartedly, one who finds refuge in me achieves the everlasting, indestructible, final bliss.”

The deed to be performed is the same-the ordained action, the exercise of yagya. And to gain it there must be self-surrender.

57. “Earnestly resigning all your deeds to me, finding shelter in me, and embracing the yog of knowledge, you should ever fix your mind on me.”

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥ ५६ ॥
चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥ ५७ ॥

Arjun is counselled to sincerely yield all his actions-whatever he is capable of doing-to Krishn, to rest in his mercy rather than depend upon his own prowess, to find shelter in him, to adopt the attitude of yog, and always bring his mind to bear on him. Yog means completion, unity, that which brings griefs to an end and provides access to God. Its mode, too, is a unity, the exercise of yagya which is founded on restraint of the attacking impulses of the mind and the senses, the regulation of the incoming and outgoing breath, and on meditation. Its outcome, also, is with the eternal God. The same is elaborated in the next verse.

58. “Ever resting on me, you will be saved from all afflictions and gain deliverance, but you shall be destroyed if out of arrogance you do not pay heed to my words .”

Thus always focusing his mind on Krishn, Arjun will conquer the citadels of the mind and the senses. As Goswami Tulsidas has put it, even celestial beings seated at the portals of these forts obstinately keep the shutters ajar as the breezes of carnal pleasure blow in. The mind and the senses at the core are the impregnable redoubts. But Arjun can storm them by aiming his thoughts at God alone. On the other hand, however, he shall be undone and deprived of the ultimate good if out of vanity he does not pay heed to Krishn's words. The point is reaffirmed.

59. “Your egotistic resolve not to fight is surely mistaken, for your nature will compel you to rake up arms in the war.”

60. “Bound by your natural calling even against your resolve, O son of Kunti, you will have to undertake the deed you are reluctant to do because of your self-deception.”

His innate disinclination to retreat from the battle with nature will compel Arjun to set upon the task before him. The subject is concluded with this and Krishn next speaks on the dwelling of God.

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।
अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारात् श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ॥ ५८ ॥
यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ ५९ ॥
स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ॥ ६० ॥

61. “Propelling all living things that bestride a body-which is but a contrivance-by his maya, O Arjun, God abides in the hearts of all beings.”

But if God lives in our hearts and is so close to us, why are we ignorant of his presence? This is so because the contraptions we call body are driven by the power of maya, the universal ignorance or illusion by virtue of which we consider the unreal universe as real and distinct from the Supreme Spirit. So this physical mechanism is a grave impediment and it takes us round endlessly through one birth after another. Where, then, can we find shelter or refuge?

62. “Seek refuge with all your heart, O Bharat, in that God by whose grace you will attain to repose and the everlasting, ultimate bliss.”

So if we have to meditate, we should do it within the realm of the heart. If we know this and yet seek for God in a temple, mosque or church, we but waste our time. Notwithstanding this, however, as it was said earlier too, these places of formal worship have their importance for seekers with inadequate awareness. The heart is the true abode of God. It is the message of even the Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ: that although God is all-pervading, he is realized only by meditation in the realm of heart.

63. “Thus have I imparted to you the knowledge which is the most mysterious of all abstruse learning; so reflect well on the whole of it (and then) you may do as you wish.”

The wisdom that Krishn has accorded is the truth; it marks the sphere where the seeker has to make his quest; and it is also the point of attainment. Yet the harsh fact is that God is commonly not perceptible. Krishn now deliberates upon the way out of this difficulty.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥ ६१ ॥
तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥ ६२ ॥
इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद् गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥ ६३ ॥

64. “Listen yet again to my most secret words, indeed felicitous, that I am going to speak to you because you are the dearest to me.”

Krishn endeavours once more to enlighten Arjun. God always stands by the seeker, for he is so dear to him. Arjun is beloved of Krishn and any benediction that the Lord bestows upon him cannot be too much. He will incessantly exert himself for the sake of his devotee. But what is the blessed revelation that Krishn is going to make to Arjun?

65. “I give you my sincere pledge, because you are so dear to me, that you must attain to me if you keep me in mind, adore me, worship me, and bow in obeisance to me.”

Arjun was exhorted earlier to seek refuge in the God that dwells in the realm of the heart. And now he is prompted to find shelter under Krishn. He is also told that in order to find this sanctuary he has to listen again to the Lord's most esoteric words. Doesn't Krishn intend to communicate by this that finding shelter under a noble teacher-preceptor is indispensable for the seeker who has taken to the spiritual path? Krishn, a Yogeshwar, then enlightens Arjun on the way of true self-surrender.

66. “Grieve not, for I shall free you from all sins if you abandon all other obligations (dharm) and seek refuge in me alone.”

Arjun is counselled that he has to rid himself of concern about what category of doer he is, whether Brahmin or Kshatriya or Vaishya or Shudra, and look for shelter under Krishn alone. By doing so he will be absolved of all iniquities and afflictions. The chosen teacher-preceptor takes it upon himself to effect the gradual elevation of the pupil to ever more refined spiritual states and his

सर्वगुहातमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ॥ ६४ ॥
मन्मया भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ ६५ ॥
सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ ६६ ॥

release from all sins if, instead of worrying about his position on the path of action, the pupil single-mindedly seeks refuge in his mentor, and looks up to no one else but his accomplished teacher-preceptor. All sages have said the same. When a holy writing is rendered, it may appear that it is for all, but it is truly “secret teaching”-secret undoubtedly because it is permitted only to those who are spiritually equipped to study and profit by it. Arjun is such a deserving pupil and so it is that Krishn instructs him so earnestly. Now Krishn himself elaborates the merits of the worthy pupil.

67. “This (the Geeta) which has been articulated for you must never be made known to one who is bereft of penance, devotion, and of willingness to listen, as also to one who speaks ill of me.”

Krishn was a realized sage and, along with adorers, he must also have faced some slanderers. The Geeta is not for people who speak maliciously of God. But, then, to whom should this sacred knowledge be made known?

68. “The one who, with firm devotion to me, imparts this most secret teaching of my worshippers will doubtlessly attain to me.”

And then Krishn speaks about the one who disseminates the sacred knowledge.

69. “Neither is there among mankind any doer who is dearer to me than this man, nor will there by any in the world who is dearer to me than him.”

The man who enlightens Krishn’s devotees, Souls who adhere to the Lord, is the most beloved of him because he is the only source of benediction-the only highway that leads one to God. He is the one who teaches men to go along the right path.

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ॥ ६७ ॥
य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥ ६८ ॥
न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥ ६९ ॥

70. “And it is my belief that I shall have been worshipped through the yagya of knowledge by one who makes a thorough study of this sacred dialogue between us.”

The “yagya of knowledge” is that, the outcome of which is wisdom. The nature of this wisdom has been elaborated earlier. This wisdom is the awareness that is acquired along with direct perception of God. And it is with such wisdom, such awareness, that the dedicated and industrious disciple of the Geeta will adore Krishn. This is something of which the Lord is firmly assured.

71. “Even he will be freed from sins who just hears it (the Geeta) with devoutness and without any ill will, and he will secure the worlds of the righteous.”

Even hearing the teachings of the Geeta with faith and without any carping is enough to elevate one to a superior mode of existence, for by this too its sacred precepts will be inculcated in the mind.

Krishn has thus, in verses 67 to 71, said that imparting of the teachings of the Geeta to the deserving is as vital as withholding them from the undeserving. Since even hearing the secret teaching of the Geeta motivates the worshipper to the required endeavour, the one who just hears it will also surely attain to Krishn. As for the one who propagates the scripture, no one else is dearer to the Lord than this man. The man who studies the Geeta worships Krishn by the yagya of knowledge. True knowledge is what issues forth from the process called yagya. In the verses under consideration, thus, the Lord has pointed out the benefits of study, dissemination, and hearing of the Geeta.

Now at the end he asks Arjun if has understood and assimilated his words.

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।

ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टं स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥ ७० ॥

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।

सोऽपिमुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्य कर्मणाम् ॥ ७१ ॥

72. “Have you, O Parth, listened intently to my words and, O Dhananjay, is your delusion born out of ignorance dispelled?”
73. “Arjun said, ‘Since my ignorance has been dispelled by your grace, O Achyut, and I have recovered discernment, I am free from doubt and shall follow your precept.’”

“Achyuth ! Because of Your grace, my passion is destroyed, I have regained my memory, I am consistent, being bereft of doubts and am ever ready to obey Your orders.” Whereas, Arjun was perplexed at the time of reviewing both the armies, to find his kith and kin therein. He prayed “Govinda! How can we be happy after annihilation of our own relatives? Family tradition will be destroyed because of such a war, there will be scarcity of obsequial offerings like rice cakes and so on to the departed ancestors, hybridization or mongrelization of castes takes place. We, being wise, yet are ready to commit sin. Why do we not find a way out of committing these sins? Let the armed Kaurava kill me, an unarmed man, in the war and that death is glorious. Govinda, I am not going to wage war.” Saying thus he sat down at the back of the chariot.

Thus in the Geeta, Arjun, in fact, put forward in front of Yogeshwar Krishn a series of big and small questions. Like in chapter 2 verse 7, “Please will You tell me that practice of worship through which I can attain to the Absolute good.” In chapter 2 verse 54, “What are the attributes of an enlightened sage?” In verse 1 of chapter 3, “If in your view the Way of Knowledge is superior, then why do you compel me to do these terrible actions?” In verse 36 of chapter 3, “Even without wishing, under whose guidance does a man commit sin?” In verse 4 of chapter 4, “Your birth is of recent times, whereas the Sun was born a long time back, then how can I believe that You taught yog to the Sun in the far distant past, in the beginning of this kalp?” In verse 1 of chapter 5, “Sometimes

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।

कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनंजय ॥ ७२ ॥

अर्जुन उवाचः

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽसि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं ॥ ७३ ॥

You praise renunciation, the way of knowledge, and yet other times you support the Way of Selfless Action. Please tell me one out of these which is final, by which I can attain to the Absolute good." In verse 35 of chapter 6, "The Mind is very fickle. With slack efforts, what would be his lot?" In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 8, "Govinda, who is that Supreme Being, whom You have described? What is the religious knowledge? What are Lords of gods and Lord of being? Who is the Lord of sacrifice in this body? What is that action? How do You come to be known at the end time?" Thus he put forward seven questions. In verse 17 of chapter 10, Arjun has evinced curiosity, asking, "While meditating incessantly, through what feelings (emotions) do I call you to mind, to remember you ?" In verse 4 of chapter 11 he prayed and submitted, "I long to see the splendours that have been described by You." In verse 1 of chapter 12, "Who is the superior possessor of Yoga among the devotees who worship you well through unvacillating attentiveness and those who worship the imperishable unmanifest Supreme Being?" In verse 21 of chapter 14, "A man who has surpassed the three natural modes is liberated of character and how can a man surpass these three modes?" In verse 1 of chapter 17, "What would be the fate of a person who engages in yagya with dedication but does not follow the procedure as laid down by the scriptures ?" And in verse 1 of chapter 18, "O' mighty armed! I yearn to learn separately and individually everything about the nature of relinquishment and renunciation."

Thus, throughout the Geeta, Arjun continued to put forward queries (The esoteric secrets which could not be asked by him were revealed by the Lord Himself.) As soon as his doubts were dispelled he was freed from asking questions and said, "Govinda! Now I am ever ready to obey your instructions." In truth the questions raised were for the benefit of all mankind and not just for Arjun alone. Without having these questions answered, no seeker can progress forward on the path of the highest good. Therefore, to enable a man to obey an enlightened guru and to progress on the path of the highest good, it is necessary, that one should learn the complete teachings of the Geeta. Arjun was convinced and satisfied that all his questions had been answered and his doubts allayed.

In Chapter 11, after having revealed his cosmic form, Krishn said in the fifty-fourth verse: “O Arjun ... a worshipper can directly know this form of mine, acquire its essence, and even become one with it by total and unswerving dedication.” And just now he has asked him whether he is rid of his delusion. Arjun replies that his ignorance is allayed and that his understanding is restored. Now he will act at Krishn’s behest. Arjun’s liberation should come along with this realization. He has indeed become whatever he had to be. But scripture is meant for posterity and the Geeta is here for all of us to avail ourselves of.

74. “Sanjay said, Thus have I heard the mysterious and sublime dialogue of Vasudeo and the sage-like Arjun.’ ”

Arjun is portrayed as a man with a noble Soul. He is a yogi, a seeker, rather than an archer set to kill. But how has Sanjay been enabled to hear the dialogue between Krishn and the saintly Arjun?

75. “It is by the blessing of the most revered Vyas that I have heard this transcendental, most mysterious yog enunciated directly by the Lord of yog Krishn himself.”

Sanjay regards Krishn as a master of yog-one who is a yogi himself and who is also endowed with the gift of imparting yog to others.

76. “The recollection of the felicitous and marvellous colloquy between Keshav and Arjun transports me , O King (Dhritrashtra), to sublime joy time after time.”

We too can experience Sanjay’s bliss if we remember the sacred dialogue with perfect contentment. Sanjay then recalls the Lord’s miraculous bearing and speaks of it.

संजय उवाचः इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।
 संवादमिममश्रौषमद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम् ॥ ७४ ॥
 व्यासप्रसादाच्छ्रुतवानेतद्गुह्यमहं परम ।
 योगं योगेश्वरात्कृष्णात्साक्षात्कथयतः स्वयम् ॥ ७५ ॥
 राजन्संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम् ।
 केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ॥ ७६ ॥

**77. “Recalling the amazing visage of the Lord again and again,
O King, I am lost in wonder and ecstasy over and over.”**

Sanjay’s rapture can be ours, too, if we incessantly keep in our minds the aspect of the cherished end.

That brings us to the last verse of the Geeta in which Sanjay states his final conclusion.

78. “Good fortune, conquest, splendour, and steadfast wisdom abide wherever are Lord Krishn and the noble archer Arjun : such is my conviction.”

Intent contemplation and firm restraint of the senses are Arjun’s bow-the legendary Gandeerv. So it is that Arjun is a sage who meditates with equanimity. So wherever Yogeshwar Krishn and he are, there too dwell the triumph after which there is no defeat, the magnificence of God, and the firmness of resolve that enables one to be constant in this inconstant world. Such is the well-deliberated judgement of Sanjay, of the seer who is gifted with celestial vision.

The great archer Arjun is no longer amidst us. But were steadfast wisdom and the glory that comes with spiritual conquest for him alone? The Geeta is a dramatization of a historical event that belonged to a certain time, namely the age that is known as Dwapar. This does not mean, however, that Arjun’s realization of the truth of God came to an end with the ceasing of his time. Yogeshwar Krishn has assured us repeatedly that he abides in the realm of the heart. He exists within all of us. He is also within you. Arjun is a symbol of affectionate devotion, which is but another name of the mind’s inclination and dedication to the cherished goal. If a worshipper is endowed with such devotion, perpetual triumph against the demeaning properties of nature is assured. With such devotion there must also always necessarily be steadfast wisdom. Rather than being confined to a certain place, time or individual, these attainments are universal-for ever and for all. So long as

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः ।

विस्मयो मे महान् राजन् हृष्यामि च पुनः पुनः ॥ ७७ ॥

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।

तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥ ७८ ॥

beings exist, God must dwell in their hearts and the Soul must impatiently hunger for the Supreme Being; and he who is affectionately devoted to God will attain to Arjun's status. Everyone of us can, therefore, aspire hopefully to the ultimate bliss of direct perception of God.



At the beginning of the eighteenth, the concluding chapter of the Geeta, Arjun wishes to be enlightened on the similarity as well as the distinction between relinquishment and renunciation. In response to this Krishn cites four prevalent creeds. While many savants style the abandonment of all action as renunciation, several others employ the term to designate the giving up of desired action. Many scholars advocate the forsaking of all deeds since all of them are flawed, but others are convinced that deeds such as yagya, penance, and charity ought not to be relinquished. One of these beliefs was right, too, and Krishn has pronounced a similar judgement, which is that yagya, penance, and charity must never be forsaken, for they bring deliverance to men of discernment. So fostering them while also giving up unrighteous impulses that are inimical to them is true renunciation. Such renunciation is perfect. But relinquishment with a desire for some profit in exchange is tainted by passion and moral blindness; and it is definitely evil when the prescribed deed is forsaken out of self deception. Renunciation is the crowning point of resignation. Performance of the prescribed task and the rapture that results from meditation are indeed virtuous, while sensual pleasure is an outcome of infatuation. And the pleasure in which there is no prospect whatsoever of the ultimate union with God undoubtedly issues forth from ignorance.

All deeds, whether done in accordance with scripture or against, are brought into being by five causes: the mind that is the doer, the various agents by which a deed is executed, the numerous desires all of which cannot be fulfilled, the indispensable power that upholds, and providence-the merits and demerits that have been harvested from the deeds of previous births. These are the five causes that effect all actions. Irrespective of this, however, there are men who

believe that the perfect God is the doer. Such men are doubtlessly of immature judgement and unaware of truth. But, whereas Krishn affirms in the chapter that God does not act, he has also exhorted Arjun earlier to but stand as a proxy since he (Lord Krishn) is the one who acts and determines.

Krishn's true message refers to the line of gravity that separates nature from man. So long as a man lives within nature, he is dominated by maya, God's "divine consort" and the mother of all material objects. But no sooner has he risen above nature and given himself up to the final emancipation than he comes under the reign of God who now rises in his heart like a charioteer. Arjun belongs to the category of such men and so does Sanjay. For others too there is the prescribed way by which they can break free from the tenacious attraction of nature. The stage following upon this is the one at which the guiding impulse comes from God himself. The impetus for the ordained action arises from the confluence of an all knowing sage, the right way of acquiring knowledge, and the Supreme Being who is the one object that ought to be known. So it is that it is an essential requirement for the seeker to take some sage as his teacher-preceptor.

For the fourth time in the Geeta, in the chapter Krishn also reverts to the four fold organization of men into classes (varn). Deeds that enable the Soul to become one with God, such as overcoming the senses, restraint of the mind, intentness, tuning the body, speech, and mind to the coveted end through self-mortification, and generation of divine awareness as well as of the readiness to adhere to God's directions-constitute the province of the Brahmin class. Prowess, unwillingness to retreat, mastery of impulses, and possession of the required skill for undertaking action-are all duties of the Kshatriya class. Care of the senses and promotion of spiritual plenty are innate obligations of the Vaishya class, while ministering to the needs of the spiritually adept is the calling of the Shudr class. Rather than alluding to any particular caste or tribe, "Shudr" only denotes the unenlightened man-the man who sits in meditation for two hours without really availing himself of even ten minutes of that time. It is true that his body is motionless,

but the mind which has to be stilled ranges wildly all the while. Rendering service to men of a higher spiritual status-to some noble mentor-is the means by which a seeker like this can liberate his Self. Little by little, merits will then be engendered in him, too, and his worship set in motion. This unenlightened man's accomplishment must necessarily, therefore, commence with rendering service. The action is only one, the ordained action-meditation, It is its practitioners who are divided into the four-excellent, good, medium, and inferior-categories of Brahmin , Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. So it is not society but action that has been divided into four classes on the basis of innate properties. Such is the character of varn postulated by the Geeta.

Elucidating the nature of reality, Krishn promises that he will instruct Arjun in the mode of that ultimate achievement which is the crowning point of knowledge. The worshipper is competent to perceive God when his wisdom, disinterest, self-control, fortitude, uninterrupted contemplation, and inclination to the meditative process-all attributes that enable the Soul to merge in the Supreme Being-are fully fledged, while at the same time afflictions such as desire, anger, delusion, fondness, and malice that hurl the Soul down into the ravines of nature are rendered inert.

This ability moulds the intent devotion that turns its eyes away from everything except the cherished goal. And it is only by such devotion that the worshipper gains awareness of reality. God alone is real and when the worshipper knows him and the celestial qualities of which he is possessed-that he is ineffable, eternal, and immutable-he at once comes to dwell in that God. So the essence is this ultimate reality rather than five or twenty-five elements. With the completion of worship the Soul is united with this essence and endowed with its sublime attributes.

Krishn further instructs Arjun that God, the ultimate reality, abides in the hearts of all beings. But men are unaware of this because, seated on the vehicle of maya, they stray and wander. So Arjun is exhorted to find shelter under the God who dwells in his heart. He ought to take refuge with all his mind, acts, and speech

in Krishn. If he but renounces all other obligations, their merits too will all be bestowed on him. And as an outcome of this abandonment he will attain to Krishn. This is the most secret knowledge that must never be imparted to one who is spiritually unworthy of receiving it. On the other hand, however, it is imperative to pass it on to truly devout men. Niggardliness in this respect is meanness, for how can the devotee be saved without this knowledge? At the end Krishn inquires if Arjun has listened attentively to his discourse, and whether he is rid of ignorance. Arjun's reply to this is that his illusion is dispelled and his discernment restored. He admits that what the Lord has told him is the truth and that he shall abide by his teachings.

Sanjay, who has heard the dialogue equally well, concludes that whereas Krishn is the supreme Yogeshwar-Lord of yog, Arjun is a sage-a man with a noble Soul. He is engulfed in wave after wave of joy as he recalls their colloquy. So we too should always bring our minds to bear upon the Supreme Spirit. Constant meditation on God is indispensable. Wherever Yogeshwar Krishn and the sage Arjun are, there too are magnificence, success, and steadfastness of resolve like the unshaken firmness of the Polar star. The ways of world that are today may change tomorrow. God alone is changeless. So the truly steadfast resolve is also that which enables the seeker to approach the immutable God. If Krishn and Arjun are taken as mere historical characters belonging to a certain age known as Dwapar, they are no longer with us today. Does it mean, however, that there is now neither conquest nor achievement for us? If that be so, the Geeta is of no value to us. But such is not the case. Krishn -an adept in yog-and Arjun-a sage with tender, affectionate devotion-are for ever. They have always been and they will always be. Introducing himself, Krishn says that although he is ineffable, the Supreme Being to whom he has attained dwells in the realm of all hearts. He has always abided there and he always will, and we all have to seek shelter under him. A sage is but a man who looks for this sanctuary. He is an affectionate devotee as Arjun is. So it is vital to seek refuge in a sage who is aware of the essence, for only he can provide the requisite impulse.

This chapter also sheds light on the nature of renunciation. The resigning, of all one has, is renunciation. Mere putting on of a certain kind of attire is not renunciation. Absorption in the ordained deed, while leading a life of seclusion, with a due appraisal of one's own strength or with a sense of self-surrender, is inescapable. Renunciation is the name of the abandonment of all action along with consummation, and so but a synonym for the final deliverance. That absolution is the crowning point of renunciation.

**Thus concludes the Eighteenth Chapter, in the Upanishad
of Shreemad Bhagwad Geeta, on the Knowledge of the
Supreme Spirit, the Science of Yog, and the Dialogue
between Krishn and Arjun, entitled:
“Sanyas Yog or “The Yog of Renunciation”**

**Thus concludes Swami Adgadanand's exposition
of the Eighteenth Chapter in “Yatharth Geeta”**

HARI OM TAT SAT